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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 8138
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 9615
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO IMMEDIATE 6321
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUYNAA/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHKO/USDAO TOKYO JA IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/USFJ IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 001822

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MOFA CAUTIONS ON U.S. MILITARY INCIDENTS/ACCIDENTS

Classified By: CDA JAMES P. ZUMWALT, REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d)

11. (C) The U.S. military should tighten discipline in response to recent crimes and accidents involving locally based U.S. servicemen, particularly in view of Japan's approaching elections, MOFA Director General for North America Kazuyoshi Umemoto told the Charge d'Affaires in an August 10 lunch. Umemoto acknowledged that incidents in recent weeks appeared minor in isolation and did not reflect an upward trend. Cumulatively, however, the incidents could suggest the emergence of a lax attitude among U.S. forces, he cautioned. (Umemoto provided a paper detailing an unarmed robbery and traffic accident in Yokosuka, as well as an armed robbery in Okinawa. He also shared graphs that showed an up-tick in incidents and accidents since July.) Umemoto stressed the potential historic significance of the August 30 elections and cautioned that crimes and accidents by U.S. servicemen could easily be politicized during the election campaign. He asked that the Embassy convey to U.S. Forces, Japan (USFJ) the need for vigilance at a time when "the level of critical mass for criticism of the U.S. military was lower." MOFA Deputy Director General for North America Koji Tomita added that such incidents ran counter to efforts to ensure a good start for Ambassador Roos.

12. (C) Charge d'Affaires Zumwalt responded that the Embassy would pass MOFA's message to USFJ and Washington. He underscored that U.S. base commanders throughout Japan were taking strong, innovative measures to reduce the number of incidents and accidents in their locales. He recounted, for example, successful efforts to address drunk-driving by the U.S. Air Force's Misawa Air Base. The Charge also concurred on the importance of a good start for Ambassador Roos, which, he said, would enable both governments to focus positively on major bilateral issues, particularly the Alliance.

13. (C) Comment: In fact, statistics released by the Okinawa police in late July show an overall decline in incidents and accidents in that prefecture over the first half of 2009, compared with the same period in 2008. MOFA officials, moreover, had also told Post the week of August 1 that incidents and accidents country-wide were low in June and average for July. Post assumes that Umemoto was under instruction from political levels, where there is concern that even minor crimes by U.S. servicemen could work to the advantage of opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) candidates in the upcoming election.
ZUMWALT